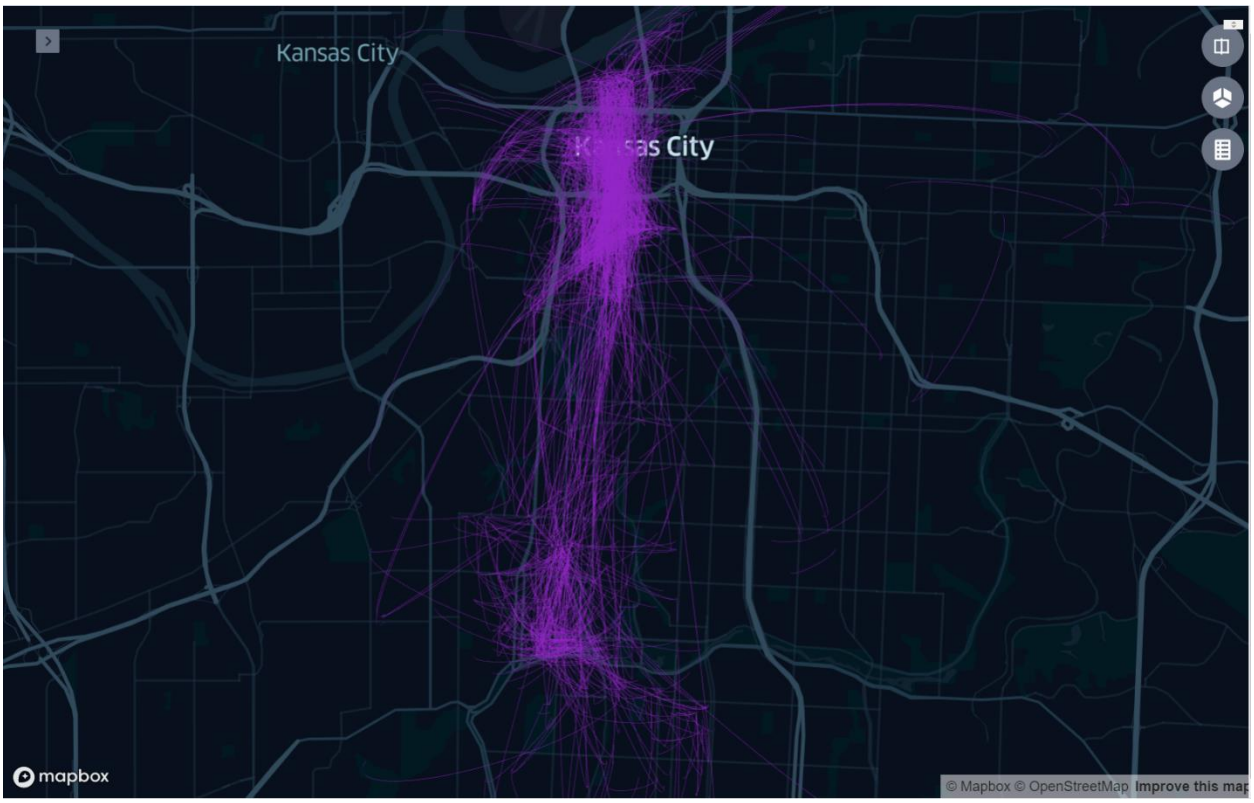
KCMO Micromobility Pilot Program First-Year Analysis

The development of additional methods of transportation, such as e-scooters and e-bikes, created a need to regulate and track data for the good of localities. As such, the City of Kansas City, Missouri (KCMO), developed a Micromobility Pilot Program following an interim operating agreement period in the Summer of 2018, in order to determine the best methods of regulation, as well as gauge how e-scooters and e-bikes best fit into our existing transportation system. Through the creation of a request for proposal that rigorously analyzed bidders, KCMO found three partners to operate within city limits beginning May 1, 2019: Bird, RideKCBike & Scooter, and Spin. **We are pleased to announce a successful first year to the pilot. With over 374,000 trips taken between 144,000 unique users for a total of 408,610 miles, it's clear there is a desire and demand for scooters in our community.** This pilot program is allowing KCMO to explore how micromobility affects transportation, safety, and equity in our community, and adjust the regulation system to align with our culture. Below are the findings from the first year of the program.

Transportation

E-scooters and e-bikes provide a solid transportation alternative for residents of our City. The general downtown area represented the most heavily trafficked portion of KCMO. Using a partnering firm, Xaqt, we were able to extract data to visualize where riders were taking trips. The geospatial data below looks at September 14th, 2019, during a high usage day, to demonstrate travel patterns.



The corridor that saw the most scooter usage is between Broadway Boulevard to the west, Oak Street to the east, the River Market to the north, and Union Station to the south. It appears that most of the ridership was heavily concentrated along the downtown strip that corresponds with the KC Streetcar. Other parts of KCMO saw strong usage including the Plaza, Westport, and UMKC campus. These trips around town lasted about ten minutes per ride, with residents using the e-scooters and e-bikes for many different reasons. Bird noted that "the diversity of trips through the city includ[ed] business trips through central downtown, shopping trips to the Plaza, commuting around UMKC and in residential neighborhoods, and recreational trips to City Market, Power & Light, and the Riverfront." Meanwhile, RideKCBike & Scooter, which operates both e-bikes and e-scooters, mentioned that "scooter trips spike by over 50% on weekend days, while being lower than e-bike trips during the week, suggest[ing] there is higher recreational use for scooters and higher commuter use for e-bikes." Understanding the transportation patterns of users can help prepare KCMO to meet residents' needs, such as ensuring safe streets, building micromobility infrastructure, and maintaining traffic flow. All of this is important to note, as the data shows that ridership in the LifeX zip codes was and remains lower than expected, even when accounting for rides per capita. KCMO hopes to improve upon this in the second year of the pilot.

Safety

The micromobility program pilot found that e-scooters and e-bikes are reliable and safe. For instance, Spin found of 58,200 trips, there were only nine reported crashes and nine reported injuries. This was on top of a daily scooter check and a comprehensive weekly scooter check to maintain vehicular quality. In total, Spin removed 16 scooters due to damage. Bird had six crashes and 49 injuries reported. However, scooter education and preparation alone are not enough to make people feel safe. As RideKCBike & Scooter noted from their user survey responses, "the majority of those who said they have not yet tried RideKC bike/scooter share is because they perceive KC's streets as too dangerous, with nearly half of them reporting they would try it if they felt safer riding a bike on the street"

Equity

Equity has been one of the more challenging measures of the program. Different providers report different user percentages within the LifeX zip codes. Less than one percent of Bird rides happen within LifeX zip codes, while four percent of RideKCBike & Scooter rides started in LifeX zip codes. According to KCMO calculations using the data provided by partnering firm Xaqt, a little less than one percent of all rides end in LifeX zip codes. We believe there is a strong correlation between the number of trips taken on Bird scooters and the number of trips overall. This could be due to the size of Bird's ridership numbers in Kansas City, and thus, why Bird's data and KCMO's data from Xaqt so closely align.

Despite lower ridership numbers, the City sees a path forward for equity measures. First, the companies have been responsive to change. Spin, Bird, and RideKCBike & Scooter all tout programs and outreach strategies to increase ridership in LifeX zip codes. Furthermore, RideKCBike & Scooter's model in outreach and programming, such as working at many different social events to raise awareness to their program, could lead to higher ridership numbers. Bird also offers an example with Washington D.C., enrolling low-income residents into a discount program to encourage ridership throughout the entire City.

KCMO is committed to improving equity components of the program and access to micromobility transportation options for all residents. It is crucial that equity measures see continued monitoring over this next pilot year and into the future— including but not limited to, raising the percentage of deployed scooters, increasing monitoring, and experimenting with varied pricing in LifeX zip codes.

Considerations for the Second Year Pilot

- Ownership: Who will take ownership of the Micromobility Program? Transitioning during the second pilot year might be a suitable option towards bringing in a team member that will shepherd the program.
- Vision: What is the direction KCMO wants to take the Micromobility Program and what are the ultimate program goals? Whomever plans to take on this program should have a vision or strategic plan regarding how the inputs will achieve the outcomes we want as a community.
- Internal Key Performance Indicators (KPIs): What measures we will use to understand the success of our outcomes? The providers each should give monthly metrics/data to the City, with Xaqt and DataKC helping to provide visual dashboards. However, these metrics themselves do not necessarily prescribe "success." Successful measures of KPIs should look something like "x number of riders in certain corridors" or "percent total of all trips from LifeX zip codes."
- Covid-19: The Pilot Program's goals abruptly shifted with the development of Coronavirus. In order to spare the market for scooters, the City cancelled daily fees from March 24th to August 1st, 2020 for all providers. In addition, the Kansas City worked with providers to understand ridership response, cleanliness, and safety for residents. It will be crucial to monitor data as Summer months typically see higher ridership, making it problematic to compare year over year ridership data between the pilot years due to Covid-19.